KRWQC IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Panel pointed to **KRWQC's simplified reporting for small-scale diversified farms** as an example of tailoring requirements to how these farms operate, and as a template other regions could use.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Nothing changes today. The report is advisory. State Water Board staff have outlined three tiers of follow-up: steps under current orders (e.g., standardizing data reporting), quicker changes through an informational order (e.g., reporting soil test data), and longer-term regulatory work on regional targets/limits, N credits, and alternative reporting. Staff have suggested public workshops; no dates are set yet. KRWQC will keep members updated.

Kings River Water Quality Coalition
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Important Coalition member updates enclosed

KINGS RIVER
WATER QUALITY COALITION

2026 Volume 3

Final Ag Expert Panel Report

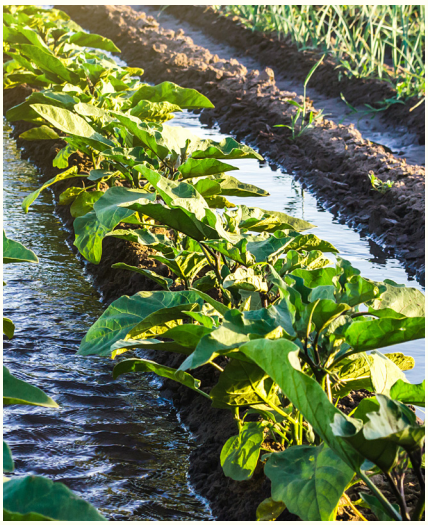
How We Got Here (Timeline)

Key Panel Recommendations for Growers

KRWQC In the Spotlight

Final Ag Expert Panel Report: What It Could Mean for Your Farm

In 2025, the State Water Resources Control Board convened the Second Statewide Agricultural Expert Panel, made up of eight scientists and farm advisors, to review how nitrogen is tracked and regulated under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) in California. The State Water Board asked the Panel one central question: is there enough science to set crop-specific nitrogen limits that protect groundwater, and if so, what should they be? After working together from August 2025 through May 2026, the Panel finalized its report in June 2026, answering the State Water Board's questions.



The report is advisory and does not change your current requirements, but it will help shape how future ILRP orders handle nitrogen targets, limits, and reporting. The Panel's central finding: N Applied minus N Removed (A–R) is the right yardstick for estimating nitrogen that could reach groundwater, while A/R remains a useful measure of grower performance.

N APPLIED (A)
What goes on the field such as synthetic fertilizer, organic fertilizer & compost, and nitrogen in irrigation water.

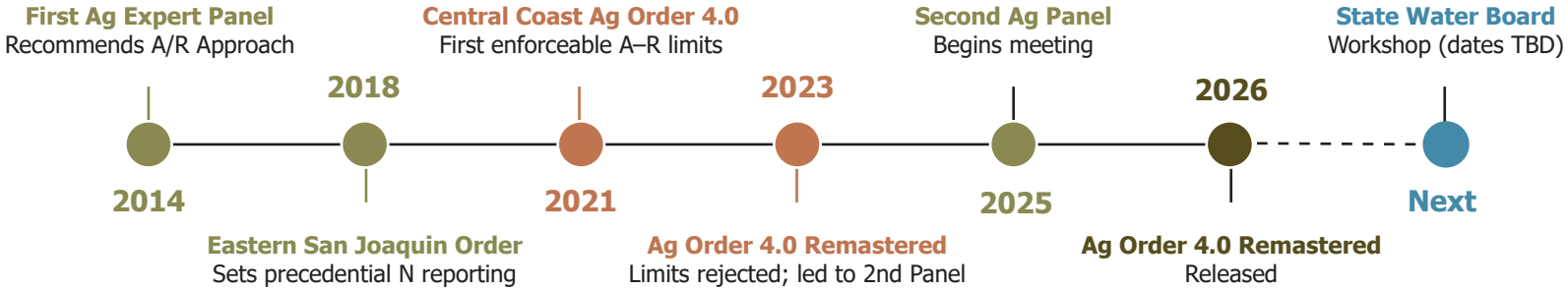
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N REMOVED (R)
What leaves the field such as harvested crop, N stored in wood (trees & vines), +panel-backed cover crop credits.

=

A – R
The metric to watch. Nitrogen left over that could move below the root zone toward groundwater. (Lower is better)

How We Got Here



Key Panel Recommendations for Growers

1. **Targets Frist, Limits Later -** A target is a non-enforceable goal; a limit is enforceable. The Panel favors starting limits at levels most growers can meet in 3–5 years, with tougher goals set as targets.
2. **Three Years Rolling Averages -** The Panel recommends using 3-year rolling averages, rather than annual values, for regulatory compliance enforcement, to account for weather, pests, and other disruptions.
3. **"Pump and Fertilize" -** The Panel recommends accounting for irrigation-water N based on the amount of water available for crop use, rather than automatically counting N in water applied for purposes such as leaching.
4. **Time to Improve Data Quality -** The Panel recommends using early audits to improve the accuracy of reported data rather than immediately relying on those findings for enforcement. It also strongly encourages in-season soil nitrate testing to help growers fine-tune fertilizer applications.
5. **Regional, Not One-Size-Fits-All -** Targets and limits should be set region by region. Initial limits should not become a statewide precedential requirement.
6. **Credit for Good Practices -** Supports N credits for winter cover crops and high-carbon amendments, and discount factors that better reflect the portion of compost and organic fertilizer N that becomes plant-available.
7. **Focus Beyond Fertilizer Alone -** Limits on synthetic fertilizer alone (like the Central Coast's) have "questionable benefits." The focus should stay on A and A–R.
8. **Options for Lower-Risk Farms -** Proposes a "reduced-risk small farms" category and alternative pathways for certain operations (i.e. wine grapes, alfalfa, non-fertilized pasture, nurseries, and some organic/regenerative farms) where reduced requirements would not increase groundwater pollution risk.